

Chairman Benishek, Ranking Member Brownley, fellow members of the Committee,

Thank you for including my bill H.R. 2527, the National Guard Military Sexual Trauma Parity Act on today's agenda. This bipartisan legislation addresses an unacceptable gap in current law that effectively leaves certain victims of sexual assault without the support and treatment that they need.

Members of the National Guard and other reserve components of the armed services have fought bravely for our country, many completing multiple tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan. Since September 11<sup>th</sup>, more than 50,000 Guardsmen and Guardswomen have been called to service, both at home and abroad.

We recognize the great importance of the National Guard and other reserve components, and thank them for their service. Members of the National Guard or other reserve components who are the unfortunate victims of sexual assault while on active duty are, like members of the other armed forces, provided all the resources and services they need to recover and heal, physically and emotionally. This treatment is provided by the VA for free for as long as is needed. This is the very least that we can do.

These benefits, however, are not offered to members of the National Guard or other reserve components who experience sexual assault while on inactive training missions. For example, Members of the Guard are required to participate in training missions one weekend a month and two weeks a year. This oversight is simply unacceptable, and leaves so many who have served our country without assistance or support during a devastating time.

The National Guard Military Sexual Trauma Parity Act would fix this omission and clarify that all victims of sexual trauma in the National Guard or other reserve components have access to the resources and services they need whether they are on active duty or on a required training mission.

We must make it a priority to change the culture of the military and put an end to acts of sexual trauma within our armed services. Until we do, however, we must provide victims with the care that they need and deserve.

I want to thank many of the Veteran Service Organizations for their support and appreciate that this subcommittee will consider this important legislation creating parity for the brave men and women in the National Guard and other reserve components.